

# THE HILL OF VISION

JAMES STEPHENS




IRENE DWEN ANDREWS

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Irene Owen Andrews

June 1923



*This photograph of Mr. Stephen of his recent visit, while*

THE old order is dead, or is old world is vanishing with it. There is a vast unrest everywhere—the unrest of that which is moving away; and that other, almost indistinguishable from it, the unrest of that which is coming in. Among the thousand evidences of decay that are everywhere about us there is as certainly evident the signs of reaction against that decay, and the will of a new mode to be, and to function.

Socially, politically, economically, philosophically, artistically, in all of these, and in the same way in them all, there is a violent turning away from all that went before us, and as violent an attempt to hew or blast a path elsewhere, where no path seems indeed—but the path is there, and will be found.

By the romantic artist or the romantic philosopher! For we are now in the Age of Romance, and had better get ready for it. Under Realism, (and we have been long under it), man can be miserable. Under Romance man can be unhappy—the difference is enormous, and well worth striving for.

The rediscovery of romance will be as disturbing an event for mankind as the discovery of America was, for the first sign of it is the sign of a new dispensation. An era is completed when an epic is written; and English literature set to its long decline with Milton. An era is commenced when a romance is written; and that we are waiting for. The interregnum may seem long, but interregnums are always fruitful,

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IF ONE wishes to sum up the value of James Stephens as a poet, now is a good time.

A dangerous thing to try, perhaps: doubly dangerous for an American city dweller. For here is a man so untouched by harshness and so simple in attitude that the utterly banal pleases him as greatly as the poignant.

As Mr. Stephens himself announces:

*My soul hath still such ecstacy  
That, on a pulse, I sing and sing  
Of Everything, and Anything!*

He likes to sing for the sheer thrill of singing. More than that, his singing is a reaction to his exuberance. Children sing thus when they are happy; they dance, too; and so, one feels, does Mr. Stephens, at least mentally.

This kind of expression of "inner ecstacy" undoubtedly delights and satisfies the performer. But that it stirs equal delight and satisfaction in the onlooker or the listener is another matter, and one for some doubt.

To go back a point: it perhaps is a good symptom for Mr. Stephens to be as greatly pleased with the banal as with the poignant—but his value as a poet must to some degree depend on his ability to lift the banal into significance, and to make the poignant unforgettable. Although it is with profound regret, one cannot help but say that Mr. Stephens accomplishes either of these things.

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# THE HILL OF VISION

BY

JAMES STEPHENS

AUTHOR OF "INSURRECTIONS"

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To  
My Wife

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*Everything that I can spy  
Through the circle of my eye,  
Everything that I can see  
Has been woven out of me;  
I have sown the stars, and threw  
Clouds of morning and of eve  
Up into the vacant blue;  
Everything that I perceive,  
Sun and sea and mountain high,  
All are moulded by my eye:  
Closing it, what shall I find?  
—Darkness, and a little wind.*



# A PRELUDE AND A SONG

---

## THE PRELUDE

*Song! glad indeed I am that we have met,  
Too long, my sister, you have stayed from  
me;*

*Almost I fancied that you could forget  
Those binding promises, that you would be  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
Waiting for me.*

*I came and looked about on every side  
But where you hid away I could not see;  
And first I searched among the meadows  
wide,  
And up the hill, and under every tree,  
And down the stream to see if you were  
there  
Waiting for me.*

*But when I did not find you in the mead,  
Or by the stream, or under any tree,  
I thought you had forgotten we agreed,  
Not long ago, that you would surely be  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
Waiting for me.*

*You came to me I do not know from where:  
I stood and saw you not, I turn and see:  
Have you sprung to me from the sunny air?  
Or in the long grass did you curiously  
Watch while I wandered, laughing as you  
lay  
Waiting for me.*

*And you have brought your pipe! let us be-  
gin,  
Against your skill I match my poetry:  
A kiss if I should fail, and if I win  
A kiss the same—tune not your melody  
Too high at first, I shall not keep you long  
Waiting for me.*

O little wind that through the forest ways



At evening and at morning still does go,  
Or from the hilltop with a lordlier praise  
Shouts without ceasing to the meads below!  
From cave or lake or wood  
Come, little wind and share our solitude;  
Leave those sad vagaries that make us  
    weep,  
Your long-blown pealing trumpet put away,  
And where a merry holiday we keep  
Here in the sunny fields come dance and  
    leap  
And sing aloud with us the live-long day.

For we have often seen you in the corn  
Nodding the poppy heads in dainty play,  
Or through the meadows on a summer morn  
Blowing the little thistle balls away:  
And one day, unobserved, we watched you  
    where  
You stole a ribbon from a maiden slim  
And threw it to a boy who stood and  
    prayed,  
Which, e'er he kissed, you snatched away  
    from him

And blew it back again unto the maid  
Who was his only hope and thought and  
care;  
And while he sighed and while she laughed  
you took  
The ribbon up and soused it in a brook,  
Beyond the reach of lover anywhere.

And yet again we saw  
You playing with the milkmaids in the  
shaw,  
Where standing near a satyr trained his eye  
If haply there was anything to see  
And crept up to you with a mind to spy  
The cause of such exceeding jollity:  
Then, when the satyr looked too curiously  
You blew his own rough beard and shaggy  
hair,  
And blinded him who stared so greedily,  
Because it was not right that he should see  
The milkmaid's kirtle that you meddled  
there.

So you can laugh and play;  
Come then and join our merry holiday:

Join in our song and maybe you will win  
Because you are so free from thought or  
care,

Nor ever question, does the sinner sin?  
Or, who has seen? or, why or when or  
where?

No longer bide  
By wood or hill or green or river's side,  
But your quaint careless lute bring with you  
here

And sing to us and we will sing to you,  
Until we find who has the finest ear,  
And who the sweetest voice and gayest  
cheer,  
And to him give the praise that is his due.

O nymphs! if ye will come from spring or  
lake,

Or where the sedge is wavering in the  
stream,

To dance with us and with us to partake  
A careless fellowship, or with us dream  
Stretched idly on the grass to watch the  
gleam

Of sunlight through the leaves—we welcome true

And will applaud your shy romantic theme,  
Your delicate wild tales and music new;  
And fair respectful courtesy extend to you.

Round the trees ye danced and flew  
While the boughs danced down to see,  
And the sun was dancing through  
Leafy spaces on the tree:  
The daisies danced, the meadow-sweet,  
All the swaying grassy blades  
Danced behind the dancing feet  
Of the merry dancing maids.

But ye goat-footed fellows keep away,  
Nor through the bushes strain your wily  
eyes,  
For ye would love to spoil our holiday,  
And fright the nymphs away with sudden  
cries,  
And whispers lewd and vicious enterprise:  
But if ye promise truly to be good,  
Then come with your thin reeds and im-  
provise



Your antic dances practiced in the wood,  
And all the games you play in sunlit soli-  
tude.

Left and right and swing around,  
Soar and dip and fall for glee,  
Happy sky and bird and ground,  
Happy wind and happy tree:  
Happy minions, dancing mad,  
Joy is guide enough for you,  
Cure the world of good and bad,  
And teach us innocence anew.

In sunlit solitude wherein ye keep  
A merriment we never understood,  
Whose only privilege is when we weep—  
Away the word! but come ye happy brood  
Of nymphs and dancing satyrs who have  
wooded

So often and so often, come and lie  
Beside us on the grass, and be as good  
As your wild natures let, while singing high  
We send our joyful choruses up to the sky.

Good and bad and right and wrong,  
Wave the silly words away:

This is wisdom to be strong,  
This is virtue to be gay:  
Let us sing and dance until  
We shall know the final art,  
How to banish good and ill  
With the laughter of the heart.

Now sister, blow your pipe with curv'd  
lips,  
And all ye others come and sit around  
And hearken to my measure as it trips  
Now high, now low, with a melodious  
sound:  
My best I sing, and if it seem to you  
That ye have heard my measures sung  
before  
In old poetic days, give me my due,  
For those who sang so well were very few  
Tho' dead, and none alive can soar  
Up to the simple rapture of my lays:  
But be ye silent till my time is o'er,  
Then if ye like my songs give me my praise.

## THE SONG

I have a black, black mind!  
What shall I do?  
If I could fly and leave it all behind,  
Scaling the blue,  
Over the trees and up and out of sight,  
And wrong and right  
Naming them both the nonsense that they  
are!  
I'd leave them far,  
Drop them behind with these and these and  
these,  
The tyrannies  
That promised to be blessings and are woes,  
The chattering crows  
That I had fancied to be singing birds,  
The angry words  
That drowse and buzz and drone and never  
stay.  
Oh! far away!

Over the pine trees and the mountain top,  
Never to stop;  
Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

If I had wings just like a bird  
I would not say a single word,  
I'd spread my wings and fly away  
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

If I could swim just like a fish  
I'd give my little tail a swish,  
I'd swim ten days and nights and then  
I never would be found again.

Or if I were a comet bright  
I'd drop in secret every night  
Ten million miles, and no one would  
Know where I kept my solitude.

But I am not a bird or fish  
Or comet, so I need not wish,  
And need not try to get away  
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

Damn Yesterday! and this and that,  
And these and those, and all the flat  
Dull catalogue of weighty things  
That somehow fastened to my wings.

Over the pine trees and the mountain top!  
I will not stop,  
I lift my wings and fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

No more of woeful Misery I sing!  
Let her go moping down the pavéd way;  
While to the sunny fields, and everything  
That laughs, and to the little birds that  
sing,  
I pass along and tune my happy lay:  
O sunny sky!  
O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-  
ing by!

I walk and play beside the little stream  
As by a friend: I dance in solitude  
Among the trees, or lie and gaze and  
dream



Along the grass, or hearken to the theme  
A lark discourses to her tender brood:

O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are  
drifting by!

There is a thrush lives snugly in a wall,  
She lets me come and peep into her nest,  
She lets me see and touch the speckled ball  
Under her wing, and does not fear at all,  
Although her shy companion is distressed:  
O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-  
ing by!

Sing, sing again ye little birds of joy!  
Call out from tree to tree and tell your tale  
Of happiness that knoweth no alloy;  
Altho' your mates seem timorous and coy  
If ye sing high enough how can ye fail?  
O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-  
ing by!

On every side, as far as I can see,

The round horizon—like a bosom's swell,  
Seems brooding in a sweet maternity  
Where no thing may be hurt, not even me,  
But she will stoop and kiss and make us  
well:

O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-  
ing by!

I am the brother of each bird and tree  
And everything that grows—your children  
glad;

Their hearts are in my heart, their ecstasy!

O Mother of all mothers, comfort me,

Give me your breast for I am very sad:

O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-  
ing by!

I wandered far away in early morn,  
When summer did the happy trees adorn;  
Leaving behind all woe and discontent,  
All sorrow and distress and angry pain,  
And did not say to any where I went,  
Or when, or if I would return again  
From leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and far away,  
And was as happy as a person may,  
Until I heard the birds all singing plain  
Upon their several trees, a joyous band,  
Who had no care save only to attain  
The food and shelter that lay every hand  
In leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and did not turn:  
At their glad songs my heart began to  
burn,  
And joy that I had never known before,  
And tears that had no meaning I could say,  
Came from the hymns the little birds did  
pour  
To me as I went softly on my way  
In leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and I was glad:  
I knew the rapture that the forest had:  
And every bird was good to me and said  
A kindly word before I passed him by,  
The cheery squirrel sat and ate his bread  
And did not fear me when I ventured nigh  
His leafy solitude.

I wandered far away—O, all alas!  
 How quickly does the little freedom pass!  
 Can I return again to domicile?  
 Or leave the birds each on his several tree?  
 Or wonder did I weep and did I smile?  
 Or recollect the songs they sang to me  
 In leafy solitude?

O birds, my brothers, sing to me once  
 more!  
 E'er I return again to whence I came,  
 Give me your happiness, your joy, your  
 lore,  
 Your woodland innocence I claim  
 Because ye truly are my brothers dear:  
 Sing to me once again before I go from  
 here.

In woodland paths again we may not meet;  
 Under the slender interlacing boughs,  
 Where all day long the sunbeams flash  
 and fleet  
 On leaf and grass and wing,  
 And all day long ye sing  
 And hold carouse:

Because ye truly are my brothers dear  
Sing to me once again before I go from  
here.

I from your happy company must go away  
To whence I came;  
But ye through all the quiet summer day  
Will sing the same,  
And fly and hold carouse  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
When I am gone, who am your brother  
dear:  
Sing to me once again before I go from  
here.

All things must cease at last;  
Night cometh after day  
And day is past:  
All things must end  
And friend from loving friend  
At the long last must rise and go away;  
And from the slender interlacing boughs  
The leaves that flutter now will fail and  
fall;



The time is come I may no more carouse,  
Farewell to ye, farewell unto ye all  
Ye birds who truly are my brothers dear:  
Sing to me once again before I go from  
here.

O clouds that sail afar, almost unseen!  
O unattainable! to you alone  
I lift my wings,  
To you I lean,  
I yearn to you beyond all other things;  
Desperate I am for you, for you I moan;  
I struggle up to you and always fail,  
I sink and fall, I fall for ever down,  
Deep down where you are not, without  
avail  
Or help or hope: a clod, a grinning clown  
Whose wry mouth laughs in fury at his  
thought;  
A discontent without a word to say;  
A hope that cannot fasten upon aught;  
A nothing that is anything it may;  
A moodiness, a hatred and a love

Mixed, mixed of good and bad that can  
not show;

But you are calm at morning as a dove  
Is calm upon her nest, and in the glow  
Of midday you are bathed round with joy,  
And as a woman looking on the child  
Within her arms asleep has no annoy  
So, with contented brows and bosom mild,  
You rest upon the evening and its gold,  
Its tender rose and pearl and green and  
gray:

O peacefulness that never has been told!  
O far away!

Over the pine trees and the mountain top,  
Never to stop

Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

Weary indeed I know the whole world is;  
Then do not sing to me a song of woe,  
But tune your pipe to every merry bliss  
Ye can remember, and I will not miss  
To join in every chorus that I know:  
Give me the very rapture of your song

Else I may go away with thoughts that do  
ye wrong

The joyful song that welcomes in the  
spring,

The tender mating song so bravely shy,  
The song that builds the nest, the merry  
ring

When the long wait is ended and ye bring  
The young birds out and teach them how  
to fly:

Sing to me of the beechnuts on the ground,  
And of the first wild flight at early dawn,  
And of the store of berries some one found  
And hid away until ye gathered round  
And ate them while he shrieked upon the  
lawn:

Sing of the swinging nest upon the tree,  
And of your mates who call and hide away,  
And of the sun that shines exceedingly,  
And of the leaves that dance, and all the  
glee

And rapture that begins at break of day.

O birds, O birds, sing once again to me!

Sing me the joy ye have not reached to yet;  
E'er I go hence give me your ecstasy,  
E'er I go hence, e'er far away I flee  
Give me the joy which I may not forget:  
The very inner rapture of your song:  
Else I may go away with thoughts that do  
ye wrong.

O follow, follow, follow!  
Blackbird, thrush and swallow;  
The air is soft, the sun is shining through  
The dancing boughs;  
A little while me company along  
And I will go with you:  
Arouse, arouse!  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Blackbird, thrush and swallow!  
Indeed the visits that I pay are very few,  
Then come to me as I have come to you:  
O follow, follow, follow!  
Leave for a little time your nested boughs  
And me accompany along,  
Join me while I am happy; rouse, O rouse!  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Sky, sky,  
On high,  
O gentle majesty!  
Come all ye happy birds and follow, follow  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
Blackbird, thrush and swallow!  
No longer in the sunlight sit and drowse  
But me accompany along;  
No longer be ye mute; arouse, arouse!  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Lift, lift, ye happy birds,  
Lift song and wing,  
And sing and fly,  
And fly again and sing  
Up to the very blueness of the sky  
Your happy words.  
O follow, follow, follow,  
Where I go racing through the shady ways,  
Blackbird, thrush and swallow,  
Shouting aloud our ecstasy of praise:  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
Me company along,  
The sun is coming with us: rouse, O rouse!  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song,



Reach up my wings!  
Now broaden into space and carry me  
Beyond where any lark that sings  
Can get:  
Into the utmost sharp tenuity,  
The breathing-point, the start, the scarcely-  
stirred  
High slenderness where never any bird  
Has winged to yet!  
The moon peace and the star peace and  
the peace  
Of chilly sunlight: to the void of space,  
The emptiness, the giant curve, the great  
Wide-stretching arms wherein the gods embrace  
And stars are born and suns: where germinate  
All fruitful seed, where life and death are  
one,  
Where all things that are not their times  
await;  
Where all things that have been again are  
gone:  
Deep Womb of Promise! back to thee  
again

And forth, revived, all living things  
Do come and go,  
Forever wax and wane into and from thy  
garden;  
There the flower springs,  
Therein does grow  
The bud of hope, the miracle to come  
For whose dear advent we are striving  
dumb  
And joyless: Garden of Delight  
That God has sowed!  
In thee the flower of flowers,  
The apple of our tree,  
The banner of our towers,  
The recompense for every misery,  
The angel-man, the purity, the light  
Whom we are working to has his abode:  
Until out back and forth, our life and  
death  
And life again, our going and return  
Prepare the way: until our latest breath,  
Deep-drawn and agonized, for him shall  
burn  
A path: for him prepare

Laughter and love and singing everywhere;  
A morning and a sunrise and a day!  
O, far away!  
Over the pine trees and the mountain top  
Never to stop  
Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

*Song! I am tired to death! here let me lie  
Where we have paced the moving trees  
along,  
Till I recover from my ecstasy:  
Farewell my Song.*

*Once more unto your pipe I lend my  
rhyme  
Who in the woods did pace with you along;  
We have been happy for a little time:  
Farewell my Song.*

*Soon, soon return or else my world is  
naught;  
Come back and we will pace the woods  
along,*

*And tell unto each other all our thought:  
Farewell my Song.*

*And when again you do come back to me  
Under the sounding trees we'll pace along,  
While to your pipe I raise my poetry:  
Farewell my Song.*

## IN THE POPPY FIELD

Mad Patsy said, he said to me,  
That every morning he could see  
An angel walking on the sky;  
Across the sunny skies of morn  
He threw great handfuls far and nigh  
Of poppy seed among the corn;  
And then, he said, the angels run  
To see the poppies in the sun.

A poppy is a devil weed,  
I said to him—he disagreed:  
He said the devil had no hand  
In spreading flowers tall and fair  
Through corn and rye and meadow land,  
By gurth and barrow everywhere:  
The devil has not any flower,  
But only money in his power.

And then he stretched out in the sun  
And rolled upon his back for fun:



He kicked his legs and roared for joy  
Because the sun was shining down,  
He said he was a little boy  
And would not work for any clown:  
He ran and laughed behind a bee,  
And danced for very ecstasy.

## THE FULNESS OF TIME

On a rusty iron throne  
Past the furthest star of space  
I saw Satan sit alone,  
Old and haggard was his face;  
For his work was done and he  
Rested in eternity.

And to him from out the sun  
Came his father and his friend  
Saying, now the work is done  
Enmity is at an end:  
And he guided Satan to  
Paradises that he knew.

Gabriel without a frown,  
Uriel without a spear,  
Raphael came singing down  
Welcoming their ancient peer,  
And they seated him beside  
One who had been crucified.

## LIGHT-O'-LOVE

But now, said she, I must away,  
And if I tend another fire  
In some man's house this you will say—  
It is not that her love doth tire:  
This is the price she has to pay,  
For bread she gets no other way,  
Still fainting for her heart's desire.

And so she went out from the door  
While I sat quiet in my chair:  
She ran back once, again—no more;  
I heard a footstep on the stair,  
A lifted latch; one moment fleet  
I heard the noises of the street,  
Then silence booming everywhere.

## NUCLEOLUS

I looked from Mount Derision at  
Two ivory thrones that were in space,  
Whereon a man and woman sat,  
The very parallels of grace,  
Not lovelier had ever been  
By mortal seen.

Then one unto the other said,  
Tell me the secret hidden well  
Which you have never uttered,  
And I to you again will tell  
My guarded thought, and we will know  
Each other so.

Then he—When those who pray beside  
My holy altars do not bear  
A gift to me I turn aside  
And do not listen to the prayer,  
But whoso brings a gift will see  
The proof of me.

And she—When on a festal day  
The youths kneel down before my shrine  
I think, if he or he might lay  
His ruddy cheek to mine  
And comfort my sick soul I'd lay  
My crown away.



## THE BRUTE

Still she said No and No,  
And begged me loose her hand :  
I let it go,  
But gripped her dress instead :  
I could not stand  
For swimming of my head.

And then a sudden weakness came upon me  
And my trembling knees  
Went shaking to the ground.  
Ah misery !  
She would not listen,  
Stared at me and frowned.

I begged, implored . . .  
All the love I'd stored  
Came gasping in a net  
Of tangled pleading,  
Sigh and pant and fret,  
And words disjointed,  
Bitten through and bleeding.

But she went No and No and No again,  
And No for ever,  
Spite of all endeavour;  
Until like wintry rain  
That pattering word whirled on my mad-  
dened head  
And froze me furious while she thought  
me dead.

But then with icy lips I cursed her there,  
Eyes, nose and teeth and hair;  
I damned her body, bones and blood—and  
then  
She scuttled homewards like a frightened  
hen.

## MOUNT DERISION

Deep within the spacious round  
I saw a man and woman bound,  
Middle to middle and knee to knee,  
With a rusty iron chain,  
Which when one or the other would flee  
Drew them close together again:  
This was on the Hill of Vision  
Which the gods call Mount Derision.

There lay upon the ground a key  
Which the couple did not see  
Tho' with fury they were bowed;  
And they struggled in the sun,  
And each to the other shouted loud  
An urgent business to be done  
If the fruitful strife might cease  
And they work together in peace.

Thought and Feeling, Brain and Heart,  
These, which cannot work apart,

Were loving sister and kindly brother  
Long ago till desire and strife  
Chained the twain unto each other  
As hated husband and hateful wife,  
Who must suffer till they see  
Love is crowned by liberty.

## THE SOOTHERER

O Little Joy, why do you run so fast?  
Waving behind you as you go away  
Your tiny hand. You smiled at me and  
cast

A silver apple, asking me to play:  
But when I ran to pick the apple up  
You ran the other way.

Bad one! I will refuse to eat my food,  
I will not talk or laugh or say a prayer  
Unless you cease from running; I will brood  
In secret if you leave me: I declare  
I'll drink and fight and go to the bad  
And curse and swear!

Little One! White One! Shy Little Gay  
Sprite!

Do not turn your head across you shoulder  
To laugh and mock at me; it is not right  
To laugh at me for I am older:



Throw me the silver apple once again  
You little scolder.

I love you very dear, indeed I do;  
I never saw a girl like you before  
In any place. You are more sweetly new  
Than a May moon: you are my store,  
My secret and my treasure and the pulse  
Of my heart's core.

Throw me the silver apple—I will run  
And pick it up and give it you again:  
Dear Heart! Sweet Laughter!—throw it  
    then for fun  
And not for me—if you will but remain,  
    . . . Nay do not run; I'll stand thus  
    far away  
And not complain.

Come just a little nearer, half a pace,  
One little, little step: my eyes are bad,  
They cannot altogether see your face  
At this great distance—if I had  
Good sight I would not mind how far I  
    stood,  
I would be glad.

Never before—or only one or two:  
I did not really like them half so well,  
Not really half so well as I like you,  
Throw me the silver apple and I'll tell  
Their names, and what I used to say to  
    them,  
—The first was Nell.

Throw me the apple and I'll tell you more;  
—She had a pretty face, but she was fat:  
We clung together when the rain would  
    pour  
Under a tree or hedge, and often sat  
Through long, still, sunny hours—Tell  
    what she said?  
I'll not do that.

I really couldn't, no, it would be wrong  
And most unfair, I will not say a word  
About the girl—(your voice is like the song  
I heard this morning from a little bird)  
    . . . I'll whisper then if you come close  
    to me,  
—You've hardly stirred.

She said she loved me better than her life.  
—You need not laugh, she said so anyway,

And meant it too, and longed to be my  
    wife:

She kissed me many times and wept to stay  
Within my arms and did not ever want  
To go away.

But she was fat, I will admit that's true:  
And so I hid when she came seeking me.  
If she had been as beautiful as you . . .  
(You are as slender as a growing tree,  
And when you move the blood goes leaping  
    through  
The heart of me).

The other girl? Yes, she is very fair:  
Her feet are lighter than the clouds on  
    high,  
And there is morn and noonday in her  
    hair,  
And mellow, sunny evenings in her eye,  
And all day long she sings just like a lark  
Up in the sky.

I say she did—she loved me very well,  
And I loved her until, Ah, woe is me!  
Until today, when passing through the dell  
I met yourself, and now I cannot see  
Her face at all, or any face but yours  
In memory.

I ought to be ashamed? well ament I?  
But that's no comfort when I'm in a trap:  
I tell you I shall sit down here and die  
Unless you stay—you do not care a rap—  
Ah, Little Sweetheart, do not run away,  
. . . Have pity on a chap.

You'll go—then listen, you are just a pig,  
A little wrinkled pig out of a sty;  
Your legs are crooked and your nose is big,  
You've got no calves, you have a silly eye,  
I don't know why I stopped to talk to you,  
I hope you'll die.

Now cry, go on, mew like a little cat,  
And rub your eyes and stamp and tear your  
wig;  
I see your ankles! listen, they are fat

And so's your head, you're angled like a  
twig,  
Your back's all baggy and your clothes  
don't fit  
And your feet are big!

She's gone, begor, she legged it like a hare!  
You'd think I had the itch, or else a face  
Like a blue monkey—keeps me standing  
there,  
Not good enough to touch her . . . !  
Back I'll race  
And make it up with Breed, that's what  
I'll do,  
. . . *There is a flower that bloometh,*  
*Tra la la la laddy la . . .*



## THE SPALPEEN

Looking on the rounded sky  
From the Hill of Vision, I  
Saw him striding here and there  
Sowing seeds upon the air,  
And he told the name of these,  
Days and Years and Centuries.

Then a seed to me he threw  
Saying, 'tis a gift for you,  
The best of all the seeds that be  
This is the seed of mystery,  
And its name is Death but no  
Other tree can blossom so.

It will top the clouds and run  
Branches up into the sun:  
Fruit and leaf and branch and stem  
Will grow far too high for them,  
The Immortals, who will cry  
We are tired and cannot die.

“Fear of the Gods” will be its name,  
It will cover up their fame;  
And beneath its shade will go  
Mighty mortals to and fro  
Who will die and live and be  
Eager through eternity.

## DANNY MURPHY

He was as old as old could be,  
His little eye could scarcely see  
His mouth was sunken in between,  
His nose and chin, and he was lean  
And twisted up and withered quite,  
So that he could not walk aright.

His pipe was always going out,  
And then he'd have to search about  
In all his pockets, and he'd mow  
—O, deary me! and, musha now!  
And then he'd light his pipe, and then  
He'd let it go clean out again.

He could not dance or jump or run,  
Or ever have a bit of fun  
Like me and Susan, when we shout  
And jump and throw ourselves about:  
But when he laughed then you could see  
He was as young as young could be.

## THE TREE OF THE BIRD

I sat beneath a tree in a wide park,  
There was a lark, a bard of ecstasy,  
Who sang among the leaves of his beloved :  
—“Thou art most fair, O, my beloved,”  
    said he,  
“None can with thee compare,  
Thy flight is with the stars and with the  
    wind,  
And thou art kind,  
O, my most well-beloved”  
—Such was his minstrelsy.

The mellow evening sun trod to a hill  
Far off and blue,  
But I was too enraptured with the skill  
Of that young songster, and the still  
Slow rustling of the boughs  
To heed how far the sun had stepped  
Unto his western house,  
Whereto

At evening he must turn again his brightness to renew.

There came to me a languor sad,  
The sacred peace which Adam had  
When in the morning after he  
Had been expelled to misery  
He wakened with his bride,  
And cried his thanks and praise to God  
For trees and dew and birds that flew,  
For sun and breeze and cloudy sails  
Which he aforetime knew and loved in  
Eden's vales.

He did a moment furthermore  
Outpour his many patterned song,  
Down to the ground and up to the sky,  
About, around, an ecstasy,  
A sheer and sweet swift rush along;  
It failed and ceased, and then he threw  
His pinions wide,  
Away he flew,  
Because he could no longer bide  
Away from her he glorified.



A little wind from out of space  
Breathed softly on my face,  
The gray and peaceful evening stole  
Around the tree, till branch and bole  
Were lost, and there remained to me  
Nothing at all to hear or see  
But this—  
A bliss, a happiness,  
A song that came like a caress,  
A memory, no more—which you,  
My friend, are very welcome to.

## PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING

Now I am nicely dressed I'll go  
Down to where the roses blow,  
I'll pluck a fair and fragrant one  
And make my mother pin it on:  
Now she's laughing, so am I—  
O, the blueness of the sky!

Down the street, turn to the right,  
Round the corner out of sight,  
Pass the church and out of town—  
Dust does show on boots of brown,  
I'd better brush them while I can;  
Step out, Peadar, be a man!

Here's a field and there's a stile,  
Shall I jump it? wait a while,  
Scale it gently, stretch my foot  
Across the mud in that big rut

And I'm still clean—faith, I'm not!  
Get some grass and rub the spot.

Dodge those nettles, here the stream  
Bubbles onward with a gleam  
Steely white, and black, and gray,  
Bending rushes on its way—  
What's that moving? It's a rat  
Washing his whiskers, isn't he fat?

Here the cow with the crumpley horn  
Whisks her tail and looks forlorn,  
She wants a milkmaid bad I guess  
How her udders swell and press  
Against her legs—and here's some sheep,  
And there's the shepherd fast asleep.

This is a sad and lonely field,  
Thistles are all that it can yield,  
I'll cross it quick, nor look behind,  
There's nothing in it but the wind:  
And if those bandy-legged trees  
Could only talk they'd curse or sneeze.

A sour, unhappy, sloppy place—  
That boot's loose! I'll tie the lace  
So, and jump this little ditch,  
. . . *Her father's really very rich:*  
*He'll be angry—there's a crow,*  
Solemn blackhead! off you go.

There a big gray, ancient ass  
Is snoozing quiet in the grass,  
He hears me coming, starts to rise,  
And wags his big ears at the flies.  
. . . *What'll I say when—there's a*  
frog,  
Go it, long-legs, jig, jig-jog.

*He'll be angry, say—"Pooh, pooh,*  
*Boy, you know not what you do."*  
*Shakespeare rot and good advice,*  
*Fat old duffer—those field mice*  
Have a good time playing round  
Through the corn and underground.

*But her mother is friends with mine,*  
*She always asks us out to dine,*

*And dear Nora, curly head,  
Loves me; so at least she said.*  
. . . Damn that ass's hee-hee-haw—  
Was that a rabbit's tail I saw?

*This is the house, Lord, I'm afraid!  
A man does suffer for a maid.*  
. . . How will I start?—the graining's  
new  
On the door—O, pluck up, do.  
Don't stand shivering there like that  
. . . The knocker's funny—rat-tat-tat.



## NORA CRIONA

I have looked him round and looked him  
through,  
Know everything that he will do  
In such a case, and such a case,  
And when a frown comes on his face  
I dream of it, and when a smile  
I trace its sources in a while.

He cannot do a thing but I  
Peep and find the reason why,  
Because I love him, and I seek,  
Every evening in the week,  
To peep behind his frowning eye  
With little query, little pry,  
And make him if a woman can  
Happier than any man.

Yesterday he gripped her tight  
And cut her throat—and serve her right!

## THE RUNE

The sun and the star,  
The moon and the sea,  
As they wandered afar  
Sent a message to me.

For our friend, lovingly  
We have fashioned a moral,  
When there's room to agree  
There is no room to quarrel.

And, therefore, we now  
Send this thought to the friend  
Whom we love, showing how  
Every quarrel will end.

To be far brings you near,  
But too near is too far;  
Can you love without fear  
When the door's on the jar?

## BESSIE BOBTAIL

As down the street she wambled slow,  
She had not got a place to go:  
She had not got a place to fall  
And rest herself—no place at all.  
She stumped along and wagged her pate  
And said a thing was desperate.

Her face was screwed and wrinkled tight  
Just like a nut—and, left and right,  
On either side she wagged her head  
And said a thing, and what she said  
Was desperate as any word  
That ever yet a person heard.

I walked behind her for a while  
And watched the people nudge and smile:  
But ever as she went she said,  
As left and right she swung her head,  
—“O, God *He knows*,” and “God *He*  
*knows*,”  
*And, surely God Almighty knows.*

## THE TINKER'S BRAT

I saw a beggar woman bare  
Her bosom to the winter air;  
And into the tender nest  
Of her famished mother-breast  
She laid her child,  
And him beguiled,  
With crooning song into his rest.

With crooning song and tender word,  
About a little singing bird,  
Who spread her wings about her brood,  
And tore her bosom up for food,  
And sang the while,  
Them to beguile,  
All in the forest's solitude.

And hearing this I could not see  
That she was clad in misery;  
For in her heart there was a glow  
Warmed her bare feet in the snow:  
In her heart was hid a sun  
Would warm the world for every one.

## NOTHING AT ALL

There was a man was very old:  
He sat beside a little fire,  
And watched the flame begin to tire.

He held his hands out to the heat,  
And in his voice was half a scold,  
Informed Creation he was cold.

And very, very feeble, too:  
He could not lift up from his seat  
To reach the fuel at his feet.

"Perhaps," said he, "God does not know  
That I am nearly frozen through;  
He might not like it if He knew.

"For an old man cannot stretch,  
When his blood's too weak to flow,  
Frozen sitting in the snow."



\* \* \* \* \*

Poor old chattering, grumbling wight!  
God will hardly come to fetch  
Wood for such an ancient wretch.

But He will send you rain more cold,  
To quench that little flickering light,  
Just like this, and freeze you quite:  
. . . Men must die when they are old.

## WHY TOMÁS CAM WAS GRUMPY

If I were rich what would I do?  
I'd leave the horse just ready to shoe,  
I'd leave the pail beside the cow,  
I'd leave the furrow beneath the plough,  
I'd leave the ducks tho' they should quack,  
"Our eggs will be stolen before you're  
back";  
I'd buy a diamond brooch, a ring,  
A golden chain which I would fling  
Around her neck . . . Ah, what an  
itch,  
If I were rich!

What would I do if I were wise?  
I would not debate about the skies,  
Nor would I try a book to write,  
Or find the wrong in the tangled right,  
I would not debate with learned men  
Of how, and what, and why, and when;

I'd train my tongue to a linnet's song,  
I'd learn the words that couldn't go  
    wrong—  
And then I'd say . . . And win the  
    prize,  
If I were wise!

But I'm not that nor t'other, I bow  
My back to the work that's waiting now.  
I'll shoe the horse that's standing ready,  
I'll milk the cow if she'll be steady,  
I'll follow the plough that turns the loam,  
I'll watch the ducks don't lay from home.  
—And I'll curse, and curse, and curse again  
Till the devil joins in with his big amen,  
And none but he and I will wot  
When the heart within me starts to rot,  
To fester and churn its ugly brew—  
. . . Where's my spade? I've work  
    to do.

## UNDER THE BRACKEN

A body lay upon the hill  
And over it the bracken swung;  
The which had houséd many an ill  
Of hand and heart and tongue:  
It was so foul the angels who  
Fit the dead for living flew  
From where the corpse was flung.

Then all the ills that had been sted  
In the heart and in the head,  
Every sin and shame he knew  
When he gloried in the sun  
Rose from hell again and flew,  
Filled with indignation,  
And did what the angel crew  
Could not bring themselves to do.

They cleanéd him more white than snow,  
They purgéd him of every stain,

Fouling their own bodies so  
They might not be clean again:  
But when the living from the dead  
Arose again the angels said,  
Behold, our work was not in vain.



## THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME

She watched the blaze,  
And so I said the thing I'd come to say,  
Pondered for days.

Her lips moved slow,  
And then a widened eye she flashed upon  
    me  
Sudden as a blow.

She turned again,  
Her hands clasping her knees and did not  
    speak:  
She did not deign.

And I, poor gnome!  
A chided cur crawls to a hole to hide:  
. . . I toddled home.

## SHAME

I was ashamed, I dared not lift my eyes,  
I could not bear to look upon the skies;  
What I had done! sure, everybody knew!  
From everywhere hands pointed where I  
    stood,  
And scornful eyes were piercing through  
    and through  
The moody armor of my hardihood.

I heard their voices too, each word an asp  
That buzz'd and stung me sudden as a  
    flame:  
And all the world was jolting on my name,  
And now and then there came a wicked  
    rasp  
Of laughter, jarring me to deeper shame.

And then I looked, but there was no one  
    nigh,  
No eyes that stabbed like swords or glinted  
    sly,

No laughter creaking on the silent air:  
And then I found that I was all alone  
Facing my soul, and next I was aware  
That this mad mockery was all my own.

# SAID THE YOUNG-YOUNG MAN TO THE OLD-OLD MAN

## I

I wish I had not grown to man's estate,  
I wish I was a silly urchin still,  
With bounding pulses and a heart elate  
To meet whatever came of good or ill.

Of good or ill! not knowing what was  
good,  
But groping to a better than I knew,  
And guessing deeper than I understood,  
And hoping truths that never could be true.

Of good or ill! when, so it often seems,  
There is no good at all but only ill.  
Alas, the sunny summer-time of dreams,  
The dragons I had nerved my hand to kill,  
The maidens I should rescue, and the queen  
Whose champion long ago I would have  
been.

## II

I wish I had a hand as big as God's  
To smash creation into smithereens,  
Till nothing but a heap of stones or clods  
Remained of its ironic might-have-beens.

The weary ages that have drifted by,  
The ages that have still to shirk and slink,  
Have fashioned us the image of an eye,  
And brains that weary when they try to  
think.

For all is as it was, and all will be  
Experimental still in ages hence:  
Poor eyes that ache because they cannot  
see!

Poor minds that strive without a recompense!

And after all the climbing climb we still  
To find o'er every height a steeper hill.



III

I wished I was a saint not long ago,  
But now I do not wish it any more:  
Who'd be the ebb if he might be the flow  
That bursts in thunder on the solid shore.

I'd be a wave impetuous as life  
And not the skulking backwash that is  
death.

I would not lose a pang of heated strife  
For all the comfort that the Preacher saith.

Straight beds of that oblivion! sodden  
sleep,

That dreams renunciations deeper still!  
Renouncing only what they cannot keep  
For trembling fingers and for flaccid will.

And yet the dreams of long ago had got  
A colour my awakening forgot.

## IV

I love rich venison and mellow wine:  
To sprawl upon a meadow in the sun:  
To swing a cane, and kiss a girl, and dine,  
To break and mend and fashion things  
for fun.

I love to look at women as they pass:  
I love to watch a valiant horse go by:  
To hear a lark sing from the seedy grass:  
To praise a friend and mock an enemy.

The glory of the sunlight and the day,  
The loveliness when evening closes slow,  
The clouds that droop away and far away  
Just faintly tinged by day's last afterglow.

And yet I fear lest misery and grief  
Like misers hide a joy beyond belief.

V

Perhaps you hearken to a wiser muse!  
The undersong of life rolling along  
So deep, so scarcely audible, we lose  
The tremble of that densely weighted song:

We who are toned to lighter melodies,  
The bee that murmurs in the scented grass,  
The sharper sweetness from the nested  
trees,  
The winds that laugh and weep before they  
pass.

We well may miss that solemn monotone.  
But ye can miss the nightingale in June!  
For music that is cousin to a groan,  
For agonies that writhe upon a tune!

Drear happiness! the linnet in the tree  
Astounds your rhythms like a mockery.

## VI

I wish that I were dead: I wish indeed  
That I were dead and buried in the ground,  
Deep down below the deepest rooted weed  
And nothing left, not even one small mound

To show where I was lying. If I lay  
Long-stretched and silent in that blank re-  
treat,

I would not hear a sound of grave or gay,  
Or even those shy, softly-stepping feet  
That come and stand a while and go away.

I would be so alone, so quite alone,  
And heedless as the dead can only be,  
Not minding what was hidden or was  
known,  
Or all the gropings of philosophy.

If I were dead—but still I could not die  
While there were winds and clouds upon  
the sky.

## VII

*Said the Old-Old Man to the Young-Young  
Man*

---

Listen well to what I say,  
These are the names of demons gray.  
Smiling-Lip whose teeth are strong.  
Friendly-Hand, whose claws are long.  
Passionate-Eye, whose glare is fire.  
Kiss-of-Joy, who lives in mire.  
These are the names of demon foes  
Who taught the Devil all he knows.

The lips of desire smile to hide  
The teeth of fierce oppression inside.  
The hand that gives and gives alway  
Only waits a time to slay.  
The eyes that woo with a fiery stare  
Are the eyes that roam anywhere.  
The kiss that is quick, and mad, and sweet  
Rolls the gutters along the street.



Beware of lips when smiling bland,  
Beware the gifts in a friendly hand,  
Beware the passionate eyes that woo,  
The sweetest kiss is the kiss to rue:  
A laugh is a lie and the truth a blow,  
—But you won't heed me whether or no.

## SECRETS

When I was young I used to think,  
That every eye peered through a chink,  
And every man was hid behind  
His own thick self where none could find.

That every woman in the street,  
Looking fair and smiling sweet,  
Was maybe hiding thoughts that were  
Not quite so sweet, nor quite so fair  
As her kind smile and blossom face;  
She hived in some forgotten place  
Within herself and could not bear  
That any man should see her there.

And though I'm older still I see  
In every face a mystery.

## CROOKED-HEART

I loosed an arrow from my bow  
Down into the world below;  
Thinking "This will surely dart,  
Guided by my guiding fate,  
Into the malignant heart  
Of the person whom I hate."

So by hatred feathered well  
Swift the flashing arrow fell:  
And I watched it from above  
Disappear  
Cleaving sheer  
Through the only heart I love.

Such the guard my angels keep!  
But my foe is guarded well:  
I have slain my love and weep  
Tears of blood, while he, asleep,  
Does not know an arrow fell!

## MAC DHOUL

I saw them all,  
I could have laughed out loud  
To see them at their capers;  
That serious, solemn-footed, weighty crowd  
Of angels, or say resurrected drapers:  
Each with a thin flame swinging round his  
    head,  
With lilting wings and eyes of holy dread,  
And curving ears strained for the great  
    foot-fall,  
And not a thought of sin— . . .  
I don't know how I kept the laughter in.

For I was there,  
Unknown, unguessed at, snug,  
In a rose tree's branchy spurt,  
With two weeks' whisker blackening lug  
    to lug,  
With tattered breeks and only half a  
    shirt.

Swollen fit to burst with laughter at the  
sight  
Of those dull angels drooping left and  
right  
Along the towering throne, each in a scare  
To hear His foot advance  
Huge from the cloud behind, all in a trance.

And suddenly,  
As silent as a ghost,  
I jumped out from the bush,  
Went scooting through the glaring, nerve-  
less host  
All petrified, all gaping in a hush :  
Came to the throne and, nimble as a rat,  
Hopped up it, squatted close, and there I  
sat,  
Squirming with laughter till I had to cry,  
To see Him standing there

Frozen with all His angels in a stare!  
He raised His hand,  
His hand! 'twas like a sky!  
Gripped me in half a finger,



Flipped me round and sent me spinning  
high  
Through the hot planets: faith, I didn't  
linger  
To scratch myself, and then adown I sped  
Scraping old moons and twisting heels and  
head  
A chuckle in the void till . . . here I  
stand  
As naked as a brick,  
I'll sing the Peeler and the Goat in half  
a tick.

## THE MERRY POLICEMAN

I was appointed guardian by  
The Power that frowns along the sky,  
To watch the tree and see that none  
Plucked of the fruit that grew thereon.

There was a robber in the tree,  
Who climbed as high as ever he  
Was able, at the top he knew  
The apple of all apples grew.

The night was dark, the branch was thin,  
In every wind he heard the din  
Of angels calling—"Guardian, see  
That no one climbs upon the tree."

And when he saw me standing there  
He shook with terror and despair,  
But I said to him—"Be at rest,  
The best to him who wants the best."

So I was sacked, but I have got  
A job in hell to keep me hot.

## TREASON

He ran unto us in the little field,  
Out from the bordering trees sprang grim-  
acing:

He swung his hand  
To the darkened land,  
And when he tried to speak to us he  
squealed;

His voice curled from him like a fright-  
ened thing

That had no sense, he fell down on the  
ground

Laughing and weeping, then, uncouthly  
grim,

He told a tale to us who stood around;  
And when his tale was told we fled from  
him.

“O, we are lost,” said he, “there is no hope,  
I say there is not any hope at all;  
We are betrayed,

The prayers we prayed,  
Our very tears, our love, our hands that  
    grope  
Tremblingly skyward, and our knees that  
    fall  
Down to adore them, all our hopes and  
    fears,  
Our tremblings and our raptures are a joke,  
Poor follies for the laughter and the sneers  
Of those black demons and the shining folk.

“I saw the radiant gods, a multitude  
Who flew down quickly to a place I know;  
A meadow fair,  
I will not tell you where:  
And from behind the moon a blacker brood  
Drove steeply down to where the gods  
    below,  
(A white assembly; circling vast around,)  
Stood rank on rank in orderly array,  
And in the center on a higher ground  
Was one more beautiful than tongue can  
    say.

"I cried—alas, the good ones do not see  
These demons come to take them in a  
snare—

My cudgel I  
Heaved shoulder-high  
And ran to aid them, ran so furiously  
My heart nigh broke, in running to get  
there,  
Nigh broke I say in pity as I ran:  
My heart! ah, gods, what laughter ye had  
made  
Of this poor foolish loving-blinded man  
If he had died in running to your aid.

"But I was late, ere I could reach the place  
The demons had descended to the ground:  
Each pointed wing  
A moment fluttering,  
And then the demons ran to an embrace  
With those white-shining ones, and made a  
sound  
Of joy and brotherhood, and gripped each  
hand,  
And laughed for merriment and danced for  
glee,



And shouted salutation band to band,  
And held and kissed each other lovingly.

“After a little time I stole away,  
I scarce could steal away for crazy pain:  
I heard them plan  
Of time and space and man,  
And what to do each in a different way  
And far apart, and when they'd meet  
again.

Alas, we are betrayed! the devils are  
Blood-brothers of the gods, where shall we  
see

But in each other now a guiding star?  
Ah comrades, do ye also fly from me?”

## THE FAIRY BOY

A little Fairy in a tree  
Wrinkled his wee face at me :  
And he sang a song of joy  
All about a little boy,  
Who upon a winter night,  
On a midnight long ago,  
Had been wrapt away from sight  
Of the world and all its woe :  
Wrapt away,  
Snapt away  
To a place where children play  
In the sunlight every day.

Where the winter is forbidden,  
Where no child may older grow,  
Where a flower is never hidden  
Underneath a pall of snow ;  
Dancing gaily  
Free from sorrow,  
Under dancing summer skies,

Where no grim mysterious morrow  
Ever comes to terrorize.

This I told a priest and he  
Spoke a word of mystery,  
And with candle, book and bell,  
Tolling Latin like a knell,  
Ruthless he  
From the tree,  
Sprinkling holy water round,  
Drove the Fairy down to hell,  
There in torment to be bound.

So the tree is withered and  
There is sorrow on the land:  
But the devils milder grow  
Dancing gay  
Every day  
In that kinder land below:  
There the devils dance for joy  
And love that little wrinkled boy.

## WHAT THE DEVIL SAID

It was the night time, God the Father Good,  
Weary of praises, on a sudden stood  
Up from His throne and leaned upon the  
    sky,  
For He had heard a sound, a little cry,  
Thin as a whisper climbing up the steep.

'And so he looked to where the Earth asleep  
Rocked with the moon, He saw the whirl-  
    ing sea  
Swing round the world in surgent energy,  
Tangling the moonlight in its netted foam,  
And nearer saw the white and fretted dome  
Of the ice-capped pole spin back a larded  
    ray  
To whistling stars, bright as a wizard's  
    day.

But these He passed with eyes intently  
    wide,

Till closer still the mountains He espied  
Squatting tremendous on the broad-backed  
Earth;

Each nursing twenty rivers at a birth.  
And then minutely sought He for the cry  
Had climbed the slant of space so hugely  
high.

He found it in a ditch outside a town,  
A tattered, hungry woman crouching down  
By a dead Babe—so there was nought to  
do,

For what is done is done, and back He  
drew

Sad to His Heaven of ivory and gold;  
And as He sat, all suddenly there rolled  
From where the woman wept upon the sod  
Satan's deep voice, "*O, thou unhappy  
God!*"



## TO THE TREE

Ballad! I have a message you must bear  
Unto a certain tree: I may not tell  
Where she abides, only, she is more fair  
Than any tree that grows down in the dell,  
Or on the mountain top, or by the well,  
Or as a lovely sentinel beside  
The roaming stream. No words can speak  
her well,  
Nor lyric sing enough her arms so wide,  
Her grace, her peace, her innocence, her  
happy pride.

Come quickly, Ballad, back to me again,  
After you have delivered to the tree  
My humble service, and if she will deign  
To trust you with a message back, then  
see  
Most strictly you forget no word that she  
Shall speak to you, no lightest yes or no:  
And what she looked like when she spoke  
of me,

And if she begged you stay or bade you go,  
Or hesitated ere she said—what you shall  
know.

Say—I will come before the day is done,  
When the cool evening trembles to the dark  
And one ray only of the dying sun  
Rests on her topmost branches, when the  
lark

Dips steeply to the grasses in the park  
And only now and then sends from below  
Her sleepy song: then, swift as to the mark  
An arrow flies, so swiftly I will go  
Nor stay until her branches wide I halt  
below.

There is a crow, a fowl of evil fame,  
Whom one day by the grace of God I'll  
slay,

Because he has adventured to my dame  
And in her bosom hides himself away:  
A wicked, curious crow, all hoary-gray;  
He listens to her heart that throbs so fleet  
Along the trunk and by the slender way  
Of her young veins whereat the branches  
meet:

A curious, bad, old, wicked crow and indiscreet.

Most Beautiful! of every tree the queen!  
About her feet the grasses wave for glee,  
About her feet the forest folk are seen;  
The timid nymph bends down a ready  
knee,  
And mighty Pan himself, unwillingly,  
Yet all perforce, must stoop before her  
grace,  
And round about in a wild ecstasy  
The light-foot satyrs (stayed from an embrace)  
Stare shamefully and dance and mince with  
antic pace.

Fortress of melody! well hidden heart!  
Deep bosomed lady whom I love so well!  
Dear solitude of singers without art!  
Sweet shadiness wherein I long to dwell,  
Enrapt and comforted from any spell  
Of thought or care or woefulness or sin;  
Or trouble which a man may not foretell;

Or slothful ease which it is death to win;  
Or fear which cometh at the last and creep-  
eth in.

If you among her little leaves will fly  
And what they whisper bring to me again,  
Dear Ballad, I will write your history  
Upon a sheepskin with a golden pen;  
It shall be read by women and by men:  
Each youth will sing it to his paramour  
As they go roving in the evening when  
All joy is innocence and love is lore,  
And you and youth and love will live for  
evermore.

Rapture and joy and ecstasy and pain!  
The windy trumpets of the void shall soar  
Over the sky. The Morning Stars again  
Will sing together joyous as of yore:  
The sea shall tramp with banners on the  
shore:  
The little hills skip merrily along

The forest leave its field and with a roar

Stride down the pathway shouting out a  
song,  
And everything be happy as the day is  
long.

*Envoi*

Ballad, farewell! go tell her how I burn,  
Say I am dead until her face I see:  
And I will wait and sigh till you return,  
And plague the god of love and life to  
favour me.



## ORA PRO NOBIS

A bird is singing now;  
Merrily  
Sings he  
Of his mate on the bough,  
And her eggs in the tree;  
But yonder a hawk  
Swoops down from the blue  
And the bird's song is finished  
—Is this story true?  
God now have mercy on me and on you.

## AFTERWARDS

*Maidenhood, maidenhood, whither art thou gone away from me? Never again will I come to thee, never again.—Sappho.*

Am I a bride?

I scarce can think it, I

Who yesterday was quick to blush and hide  
Behind my mother's skirts, and often  
cried—

(Foolish to be so shy)

When strangers came and mother was not  
nigh.

Strange, I am wed!

Wife to be held and kissed!

And no one chides his head beside my head,  
Nor cries, "Thou bad thing, fie!" but all  
instead

Smile blessingly. I wist

It is a wonder tale . . . yet something  
dear is missed.

No longer free.

Love's captive I am ta'en.

. . . Now whither art thou gone away  
from me

Dear maidenhood? "O, I am so far from  
thee.

And howso thou complain,

I never more may come to thee again."

# THE END OF THE ROAD

*To Æ*

This is a thing is true,  
Everything comes to an end:  
The loving of me and you,  
The walking of friend and friend.

Shall I weep the beauty I knew,  
Or the greatness gathered away  
Or the truth that is only true,  
As the things that a man will say?

The child and the mother will die,  
The wife and the husband sever,  
The sun will go out of the sky,  
And the rain will be falling for ever.

For ever until the waves rear  
To the skies with a terrible tune,  
And cover the earth and air,  
And climb up the beach of the moon.

Then go, for all things must end,  
And this is true as I say—  
A friend will be leaving a friend,  
And a man will be going away.



## WIND AND TREE

*To Æ*

“A woman is a branchy tree  
And man a singing wind,  
And from her branches carelessly  
He takes what he can find:  
Then man and wind go far away  
While winter comes with loneliness,  
With cold and rain and slow decay  
On woman and on tree till they  
Droop down unto the ground and be  
A withered woman, a withered tree;  
While wind and man woo undismayed  
Another tree, another maid.”

## EVE

Long ago in ages gray,  
I was fashioned out of clay:  
Built with the sun and moon,  
Kneaded to a holy tune;  
And there came to me a breath  
From the House of Life and Death.

Then the sun roared into fire,  
And the moon with swift desire  
Leaped among the starry throng  
Singing on her journey long;  
And I climbed up from the sod,  
Holding to the hand of God.

In a garden fair and wide  
Looking down a mountain side,  
Prone I lay and felt the press  
Of Immensity's caress,  
There a space I lived and knew  
What the Power meant to do.

Till upon a day there came  
Down to me a voice of flame,  
"Thou the corner-stone of man,  
Rise and set about my plan,  
Nothing doubting, for a guide  
I have quickened in thy side."

From the garden wide and fair,  
From the pure and holy air,  
Down the mountain side I crept  
Stumbling often, ill-adept;  
Feeling pangs of woeful bliss  
Rounding from the primal kiss.

Then from out my straining side  
Came the son who is my guide:  
Him I nursed through faithful days  
Till I faltered at his gaze,  
Staring boldly when he saw  
I was woman, life, and law.

Life and law and dear delight:  
I the moon upon the night  
All alluring: I the tree

Growing nuts of mystery:  
I the tincture and the dew  
That the apple reddens through.

I desirable and sweet:  
I of fruitfulness complete:  
I the promise and the threat  
Which the gods may not forget:  
I the Weaver spinning blind  
Destinies for humankind.

Lifting, lifting ever up  
Till I reach the golden cup:  
Groping down and ever down  
Till I find the buried crown:  
I the Searcher sent to bring  
Plumes for the Almighty's Wing.

Weaving Life and Death I go:  
Building what I do not know:  
Planting tho' in sore distress,  
Gardens in the wilderness:  
Palaces too big to scan  
By the little eye of man.

Knowing surely this is true,  
That the thing I have to do,  
Has been ordered by the breath  
From the House of Life and Death:  
It no wind of chance or wide  
Cloud of doubt may set aside.

Still the sun roars out in fire,  
And the moon with pale desire  
Keeps the path appointed her  
In the starry theatre:  
Sun and moon and I are true,  
To the work we have to do.



## THE BREATH OF LIFE

*(To Elizabeth Bloxham)*

And while they talked and talked, and  
while they sat  
Changing their base minds into baser coin;  
And telling—they! how truth and beauty  
join,  
And how a certain this was good, but that  
Was baser than the viper or the toad,  
Or the blind beggar glaring down the road.

I turned from them in fury, and I ran  
To where the moon shone out upon the  
height,  
Down the long reaches of a summer night,  
Stretching slim fingers, and the starry clan  
Grew thicker than the flowers that we see  
Clustered in quiet fields of greenery.

Around me was the night-time sane and  
cold,

The clouds that knew no care and no restraint

Swung through the silences, or drifted faint  
To pale horizons, wreathing fold on fold,  
The moon's sharp edge, each rolling cloud  
a sea,

A foam of silver shining gloriously.

The quietudes that sunder star from star,  
The hazy distances of loneliness,  
Where never eagle's wing or timid press  
Of lark or wren could venture, and the far  
Profundities untravelled and unstirred  
By any act of man or thought or word.

These held me with amazement and delight:

I yearned up through the spaces of the sky,

Beyond the rolling clouds, beyond the high  
And delicate white moon, and up the height,

And past the rocking stars, and out to where

The ether failed in spaces sharp and bare.

The breath that is the very breath of life  
Throbbled close to me: I heard the pulses  
beat,  
That lift the universes into heat:  
The slow withdrawal, and the deeper strife  
Of His wide respiration, like a sea  
It ebbed and flooded through immensity.

His breath alone in wave on mighty wave!  
O moon and stars swell to a raptured song!  
Ye mountains toss the harmony along!  
O little men with little souls to save  
Swing up glad chantings, ring the skies  
above,  
With boundless gratitude for boundless  
love!

Probing the ocean to its steepest drop;  
Rejoicing in the viper and the toad,  
And the blind beggar glaring down the  
road;  
And they who talk and talk and never stop  
Equally quickening; with a care to bend  
The gnat's slant wing into a swifter end.

Searching the quarries of all life, the deep  
Low crannies and shy places of the world,  
To warm the smallest insect that is curled  
In a deep root, or on the sun to heap  
Fiercer combustion, spending love on all  
In equal share, the mighty and the small.

\* \* \* \*

The silence clung about me like a gift,  
The tender night-time folded me around  
Protectingly, and in a peace profound  
The clouds drooped slowly backward drift  
on drift  
Into the darkness, and the moon was gone,  
And soon the stars had vanished every one.

But on the sky, a handsbreadth in the west,  
A faint cold brightness crept and soared  
and spread,  
Until the rustling heavens overhead,  
And the gray trees and grass were manifest:  
Then through the chill a golden spear was  
hurled,  
And the big sun tossed laughter on the  
world.

## IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

I thought I heard Him calling. Did you  
hear

A sound, a little sound? My curious ear  
Is dinned with flying noises, and the tree  
Goes—whisper, whisper, whisper silently  
Till all its whispers spread into the sound  
Of a dull roar. Lie closer to the ground,  
The shade is deep and He may pass us by,  
We are so very small, and His great eye,  
Customed to starry majesties, may gaze  
Too wide to spy us hiding in the maze:  
Ah, misery! the sun has not yet gone  
And we are naked: He will look upon  
Our crouching shame, may make us stand  
upright

Burning in terror—O, that it were night!  
He may not come . . . what? listen,  
listen, now—

He is here! lie closer . . . *Adam,*  
*where art thou?*



## NEW PINIONS

I tore the shackles from my feet,  
The bandage from my straining eye,  
I spread my wings above the street  
And soared upon the sky.  
I knew the stars for friends, and knew  
The sun and moon more happy grew  
To see me flying by.

And they, far down below, who moved  
With hobbled ankles, groping mad  
Among the gutters disapproved  
And said that it was sad  
A man should want to leave the sty,  
To spread his wings abroad and fly  
When garbage might be had.

But I in converse with the sun,  
Or visiting the moon on high,  
Or joining with a star to run  
Mad races on the sky,

Can hardly find the time to spare  
A thought for the dull gropers there  
Who never lift an eye.

## PSYCHOMETRIST

I listened to a man and he  
Had no word to say to me:  
Then unto a stone I bowed,  
And it spoke to me aloud.

"The Force that bindeth me so long,  
Once moved in the linnet's song,  
Now upon the ground I lie,  
While the centuries go by.

"Linnets must for joy atone  
And he fastened into stone,  
While upon the waving tree  
Stones shall sing in Energy."

## THE WINGED TRAMP

I saw a poor man walking slow,  
Scarcely knowing where to go;  
And from door to door he said,  
Unto those who stood within,  
—"Give me, with a little bread,  
Absolution for my sin."

And the people always said,  
—"Friend, come in and eat our bread;  
Lay you down and rest a while,  
Sleep a little time and pray  
Unto God and He will smile  
All your weighty sin away."

Then the poor man rose and flew  
Up to God and no one knew  
He was God's beloved Son:  
And He told His Father plain  
What the folk had said and done:  
—So God spared the world again.

## POLES

Cleric and Convict are moulded on,  
The same old grinning skeleton,  
And a saint might think if he looked within  
That the Devil had gotten beneath his  
skin.



## CHOPIN'S FUNERAL MARCH

Yea, ye shall rest, O be sure that your sleep  
will endure:

Through the daylight, the dusk, and the  
dark, while the moon and the sun

Rise successive and fail and die down when  
the journey is done:

Ye shall rest, taking heed of no thing that  
shall come or shall go:

Ye shall sleep through the thunder nor  
heed when the hurricanes blow:

When the strong trees are felled and the  
rocks topple down from the height:

While the mountains dissolve into sand and  
the valleys upright

Climb stark into mountains again, ye shall  
hear not a sound,

Secure in the sleep that I give in the heart  
of the ground:

CHOPIN'S FUNERAL MARCH 115

Till the earth like a mote through the  
spaces falls into the sun,  
And the work of all things that have been  
is a work that is done.

## THE MONKEY'S COUSIN

I shall reach up, I shall grow  
Till the high gods say—"Hello,  
Little brother, you must stop  
Ere our shoulders you o'ertop."

I shall grow up, I shall reach  
Till the little gods beseech  
—"Master, wait a little, do,  
We are running after you!"

I shall bulk and swell and scale  
Till the little gods shall quail,  
Running here and there to hide  
From the terror of my stride.

# THE LONELY GOD

*(To Stephen MacKenna)*

So Eden was deserted, and at Eve  
Into the quiet place God came to grieve.  
His face was sad, His hands hung slackly  
down

Along His robe, too sorrowful to frown  
He paced along the grassy paths and  
through

The silent trees, and where the flowers  
grew

Tended by Adam. All the birds had gone  
Out to the world, and singing was not one  
To cheer the lonely God out of His grief—  
The silence broken only when a leaf  
Tap't lightly on a leaf, or when the wind,  
Slow-handed, swayed the bushes to its mind.

And so along the base of a round hill,  
Rolling in fern, He bent His way until

He neared the little hut which Adam made,  
And saw its dusky roof-tree overlaid  
With greenest leaves. Here Adam and his  
spouse  
Were wont to nestle in their little house  
Snug at the dew-time: here He, standing  
sad,  
Sighed with the wind, nor any pleasure had  
In heavenly knowledge, for His darlings  
twain,  
Had gone from Him to learn the feel of  
pain,  
And what was meant by sorrow and de-  
spair,  
—Drear knowledge for a Father to pre-  
pare.

There He looked sadly on the little place,  
A beehive round it was, without a trace  
Of occupant or owner: standing dim  
Among the gloomy trees it seemed to Him  
A final desolation, the last word  
Wherewith the lips of silence had been  
stirred.



Chaste and remote, so tiny and so shy,  
So new withal, so lost to any eye,  
So pac't of memories all innocent  
Of days and nights that in it had been  
    spent

In blithe communion, Adam, Eve, and He,  
Afar from Heaven and its gaudery  
And now no more! He still must be the  
    God

But not the friend; a Father with a rod  
Whose voice was fear, whose countenance  
    a threat,

Whose coming terror, and whose going wet  
With penitential tears; not evermore  
Would they run forth to meet Him as  
    before

With careless laughter, striving each to be  
First to His hand and dancing in their  
    glee

To see Him coming—they would hide in-  
    stead

At His approach, or stand and hang the  
    head,

Speaking in whispers, and would learn to  
pray  
Instead of asking, "Father, if we may."

Never again to Eden would He haste  
At cool of evening, when the sun had paced  
Back from the tree-tops, slanting from the  
rim  
Of a low cloud, what time the twilight dim,  
Knit tree to tree in shadow, gathering slow  
Till all had met and vanished in the flow  
Of dusky silence, and a brooding star  
Stared at the growing darkness from afar,  
While haply now and then some nested bird  
Would lift upon the air a sleepy word  
Most musical, or swing its airy bed  
To the high moon that drifted overhead.

'Twas good to quit at evening His great  
throne,  
To lay His crown aside, and all alone  
Down through the quiet air to stoop and  
glide  
Unkenned by angels: silently to hide

In the green fields, by dappled shades,  
    where brooks,  
Through leafy solitudes and quiet nooks  
Flowed far from heavenly majesty and  
    pride,  
From light astounding and the wheeling  
    tide  
Of roaring stars. Thus does it ever seem  
Good to the best to stay aside and dream  
In narrow places, where the hand can feel  
Something beside, and know that it is real.

His angels! silly creatures who could sing  
And sing again, and delicately fling  
The smoky censer, bow and stand aside  
All mute in adoration: thronging wide,  
Till nowhere could He look but soon He  
    saw

An angel bending humbly to the law  
Mechanic; knowing nothing more of pain,  
Than when they were forbid to sing again,  
Or swing anew the censer, or bow down,  
In humble adoration of His frown.  
This was the thought in Eden as He trod  
. . . It is a lonely thing to be a God.

So long! afar through Time He bent His  
mind,  
For the beginning, which He could not  
find,  
Through endless centuries and backwards  
still  
Endless for ever, till His 'stonied will  
Halted in circles, dizzied in the swing  
Of mazy nothingness—His mind could  
bring  
Not to subjection, grip or hold the theme  
Whose wide horizon melted like a dream  
To thinnest edges. Infinite behind  
The piling centuries were trodden blind  
In gulfs chaotic—so He could not see  
When He was not who always had To Be.

Not even godly fortitude can stare  
Into Eternity, nor easy bear  
The insolent vacuity of Time:  
It is too much, the mind can never climb  
Up to its meaning, for, without an end,  
Without beginning, plan, or scope, or trend  
To point a path, there nothing is to hold

And steady surmise: so the mind is rolled  
And swayed and drowned in dull Immen-  
sity.

Eternity outfaces even Me  
With its indifference, and the fruitless year,  
Would swing as fruitless were I never here.

And so for ever, day and night the same,  
Years flying swiftly nowhere, like a game  
Played random by a madman, without end  
Or any reasoned object but to spend  
What is unspendable—Eternal Woe!  
O Weariness of Time that fast or slow  
Goes never further, never has in view  
An ending to the thing it seeks to do,  
And so does nothing: merely ebb and flow,  
From nowhere into nowhere, touching so  
The shores of many stars and passing on,  
Careless of what may come or what has  
gone.

O solitude unspeakable! to be  
For ever with oneself! never to see  
An equal face, or feel an equal hand,



To sit in state and issue reprimand,  
Admonishment or glory, and to smile  
Disdaining what has happened the while!  
O to be breast to breast against a foe!  
Against a friend! to strive and not to know  
The laboured outcome: Love nor be aware  
How much the other loved, and greatly  
care

With passion for that happy love or hate,  
Nor know what joy or dole was hid in fate.

For I have ranged the spacy width and gone  
Swift north and south, striving to look  
upon

An ending somewhere. Many days I sped  
Hard to the west, a thousand years I fled  
Eastwards in fury, but I could not find  
The fringes of the Infinite. Behind  
And yet behind, and ever at the end  
Came new beginnings, paths that did not  
wend

To anywhere were there: and ever vast  
And vaster spaces opened—till at last  
Dizzied with distance, thrilling to a pain  
Unnameable, I turned to Heaven again.

And there My angels were prepared to fling  
The cloudy incense, there prepared to sing  
My praise and glory—O, in fury I  
Then roared them senseless, then threw  
down the sky

And stamped upon it, buffeted a star  
With My great fist, and flung the sun afar :  
Shouted My anger till the mighty sound  
Rung to the width, frightening the furthest  
bound

And scope of hearing: tumult vaster still,  
Thronging the echo, dinning my ears, until  
I fled in silence, seeking out a place  
To hide Me from the very thought of  
Space.

And so, He thought, in Mine own Image I  
Have made a man, remote from Heaven  
high

And all its humble angels: I have poured  
My essence in his nostrils: I have cored  
His heart with My own spirit; part of Me  
His mind with laboured growth unceasingly  
Must strive to equal Mine; must ever grow

By virtue of My essence till he know  
Both good and evil through the solemn test  
Of sin and retribution, till, with zest,  
He feels his godhead, soars to challenge  
Me  
In Mine own Heaven for supremacy.

Through savage beasts and still more savage clay  
Invincible, I bid him fight a way  
To greater battles, crawling through defeat  
Into defeat again: ordained to meet  
Disaster in disaster: prone to fall  
I prick him with My memory to call  
Defiance at his victor and arise  
With anguished fury to his greater size  
Through tribulation, terror and despair  
Astounded, he must fight to higher air,  
Climb battle into battle till he be  
Confronted with a flaming sword and Me.

So growing age by age to greater strength,  
To greater beauty, skill and deep intent:  
With wisdom wrung from pain, with energy

Nourished in sin and sorrow he will be  
Strong, pure and proud an enemy to meet,  
Tremendous on a battle-field, or sweet  
To walk by as a friend with candid mind.  
—Dear enemy or friend so hard to find,  
I yet shall find you, yet shall put My breast  
In enmity or love against your breast  
Shall smite or clasp with equal ecstasy  
The enemy or friend who grows to Me.

The topmost blossom of his growing I  
Shall take unto Me, cherish and lift high  
Beside Myself upon My holy throne:  
—It is not good for God to be alone.  
The perfect woman of his perfect race  
Shall sit beside Me in the highest place  
And be My Goddess, Queen, Companion,  
Wife,  
The rounder of My majesty, the life,  
Of My ambition. She will smile to see  
Me bending down to worship at her knee  
Who never bent before, and she will say,  
—“Dear God, who was it taught *Thee* how  
to pray?”

And through eternity, adown the slope  
Of never-ending time, compact of hope,  
Of zest and young enjoyment, I and She  
Will walk together, sowing jollity  
Among the raving stars, and laughter  
through

The vacancies of Heaven, till the blue  
Vast amplitudes of space lift up a song,  
The echo of our presence, rolled along  
And ever rolling where the planets sing  
The majesty and glory of the King.  
Then conquered, thou, eternity, shall lie  
Under my hand as little as a fly.

I am the Master: I the mighty God  
And you My workshop. Your pavilions  
trod

By Me and Mine shall never cease to be,  
For you are but the magnitude of Me,  
The width of My extension, the surround  
Of My dense splendor. Rolling, rolling  
round,

To steeped infinity and out beyond  
My own strong comprehension you are  
bond



And servile to My doings. Let you swing  
More wide and ever wide you do but fling  
Around this instant Me, and measure still  
The breadth and the proportion of My  
Will.

Then stooping to the hut—a beehive  
round—

God entered in and saw upon the ground  
The dusty garland, Adam, (learned to  
weave)

Had loving placed upon the head of Eve  
Before the terror came, when joyous they  
Could look for God at closing of the day  
Profound and happy. So the Mighty  
Guest

Bent, took, and placed the blossoms in His  
breast.

“This,” said He gently, “I shall show My  
queen

When she hath grown to Me in space  
serene,

And say “’twas worn by Eve.” So, smil-  
ing fair,

He spread abroad His wings upon the air.

## HAIL AND FAREWELL

*The poem is sung,  
The picture quite  
Finished and hung  
In the candid light;  
But poet and painter must go away  
Ere they hear what the critical people say.*

*Age after age,  
Without a break,  
A prophet shall rage  
By a lonely lake:  
And know not ere he has gone away  
Who is to listen to what he'll say.*

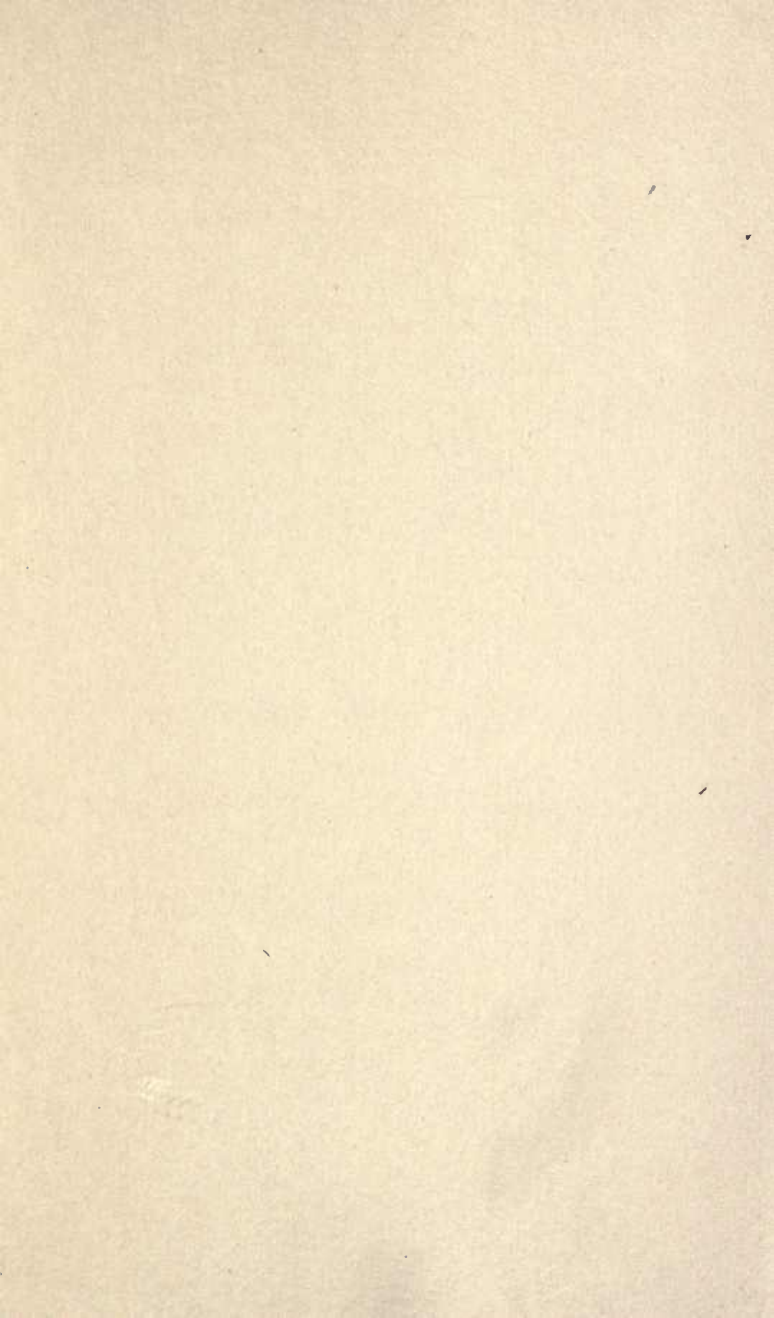
*But the poet shall hear,  
The painter see  
The praises dear  
Of their mystery:  
And poet and painter and prophet find  
The glory they thought they had left be-  
hind.*

*There is an ear  
To hear the song,  
An eye to peer  
At the picture long:  
A brain to gather the tale and bless  
The prophet who spoke to the wilderness.*



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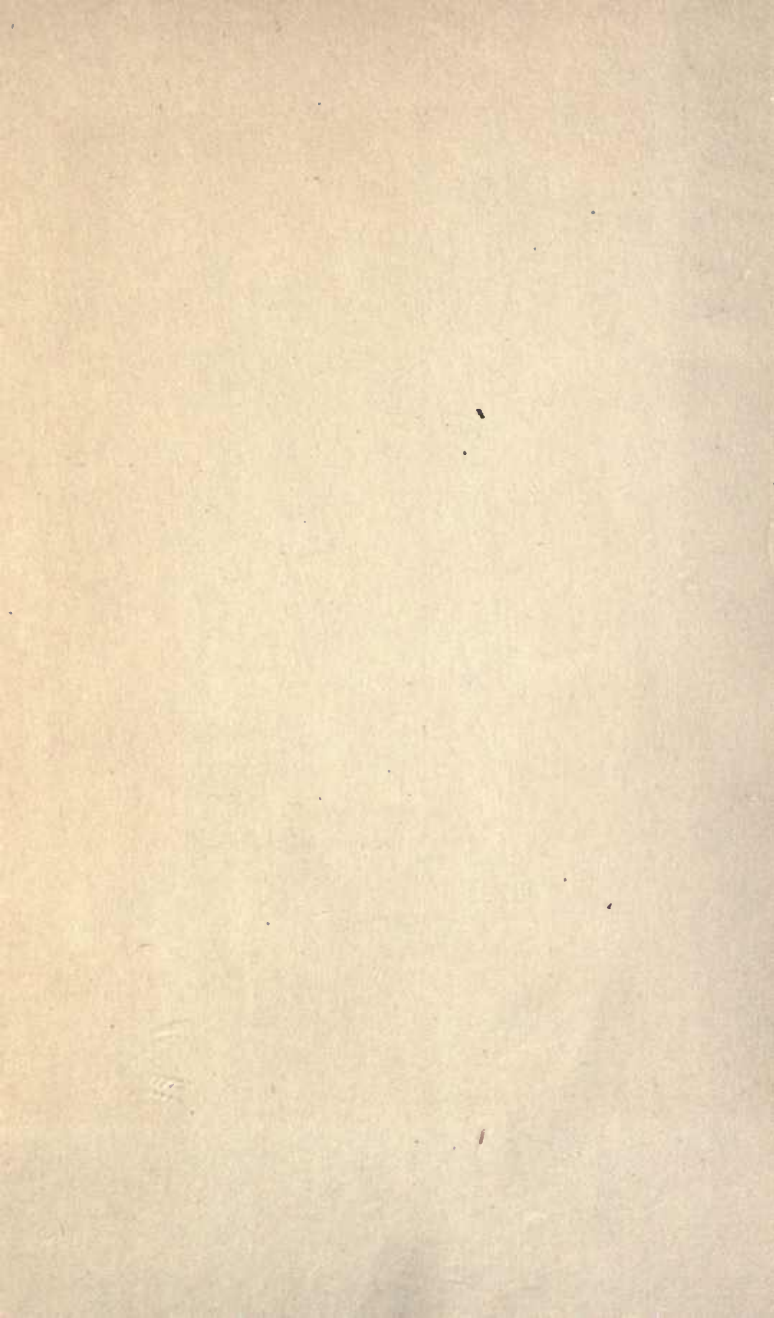
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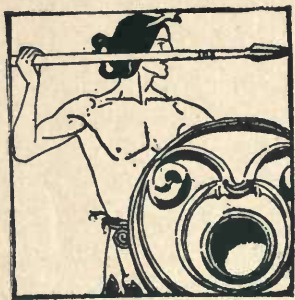


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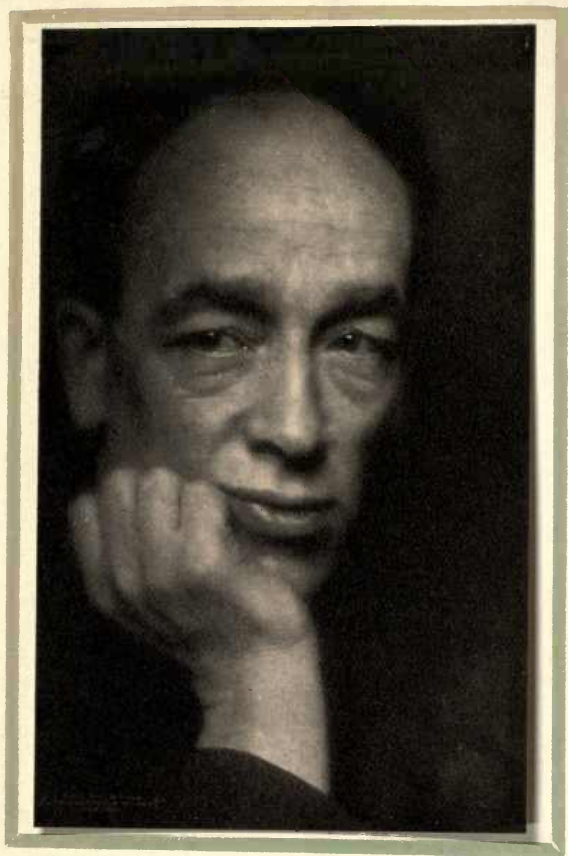
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JAMES STEPHENS



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# James Stephens



HERE are few more retiring figures in the literary world than James Stephens. Possessed of genius and a delightful originality in thought and expression which have endeared him to thousands, his unassuming temperament has kept him out of the limelight. Of the real Stephens, the man behind the author, there are few who know.

This is unfortunate, for under the reserved exterior there is a warm and vibrant personality, immensely lovable and engaging. Unlike some authors who fear to give anything of themselves except in print, his whimsicalities are so much a part of him that as one intimate friend has said, a half-hour with him is like hearing for the first time one of the stories in *HERE ARE LADIES*; to receive his letters is like a new chapter in *THE CROCK OF GOLD*.

James Stephens was born in Ireland in 1882. A. E. (George William Russell) "discovered" him while he was working as a typist for a lawyer in Dublin. It is interesting to know that among his very first publications were the Jottings of a Philosopher appearing in a Dublin paper. These, elaborated upon, later became *THE CROCK OF GOLD*, which first brought him widespread recognition and which was given the Polignac Prize as being the best book of its year.

"What most separates him from Irish writers of the day," says John Cowper Powys, famous English critic



and lecturer, "is a mingling of direct, almost Dickensian humor with the poetic sense of beauty of the Celtic. His fairy stories, *THE CROCK OF GOLD* and *IN THE LAND OF YOUTH*, differ entirely from the work both of Colum and W. B. Yeats, both of Synge and A. E. in the fact that with the imaginative poetry there comes a bitter after-taste of drastic human philosophy. In fact, in both Stephens' poetry and prose, there is a universal human quality, acrid, astringent, saturnine, which gives a certain weight and beauty to his Irish fancies.

"The humor of James Stephens is not merely playful and roguish; it is sardonic. Here is 'Miching Mallach.' What is so fascinating about James Stephens' work is that he uses the quaint, original, dialect expressions derived from the Irish peasantry to pour forth a certain drastic, but not altogether disillusioned philosophy of his own. This philosophy, sometimes angry, though never quite malignant, mingles with the smoke of his offering in the temple in a brazier dedicated to pontifical incense. The fairies of Padraic Colum come and go in a normal world of spring, summer, autumn, winter. But the supernatural beings introduced by James Stephens belong to some fourth dimension fairyland and are used as symbols for a strange, occult philosophy."

Mr. Stephens is now engaged in making a series of books from the old bardic tales of Ireland. First he gave us his lovely *DEIRDRE*, for which he was awarded the *Tailltean Gold Medal*. *IN THE LAND OF YOUTH* marks the second volume of a work which it is planned

to complete in five volumes. His ambition, he declares, is to give Ireland something that will correspond to the "Arabian Nights." To this end he has been absorbing Gaelic literature and studying the Irish language with an enthusiasm and thoroughness which indicates how completely he has found himself in his great task.

Of his books he says, "If I were giving prizes to myself I should certainly hand at least six gold medals, each as big as a tub, to *THE DEMI-GODS*, and I should give twenty-six bigger and brighter and better medals to the *IRISH FAIRY TALES*. *DEIRDRE* and *IN THE LAND OF YOUTH* are too recent for me to say much about them, but I will agree with anyone that a medal twice as big as a door would not half . . . However, you will gather that I approve of my own books; they are my favorite reading while I am writing them."

To read one of Stephens' novels is to become an enthusiast. His books do not come tumbling on one another's heels. But all that he writes is pure gold and well worth waiting for. Foremost critics throughout the English-speaking world have given him unstinted praise for the striking originality and depth of imaginative power he has displayed. In referring to *THE CROCK OF GOLD*, the *New York Times* reviewer said, "The book is full of sweetness and whimsicality, of sympathy, tenderness and shy satire, of merriment and poetry. Similar qualities have been shown by the author in his story, *THE DEMI-GODS*, to write which he dipped into the sparkling fountain of his apparently inexhaustible originality." The

*Atlantic Monthly* said "THE CROCK OF GOLD is like sunlight, ozone and high spirits. There is no book in the world the least like it, and probably there never will be another."

His work is all marked by a singular beauty, a delicious, fantastical, amorphous, inspired topsyturvydom which "is written to those divine remnants of our former selves which we may have had the luck to keep and which he has had the generosity to act as if we had kept even more than we have."



# The Crock of Gold

♦

First published in 1912, this delightful book won immediate fame and has enjoyed continuous popularity ever since. There are passages which will bear comparison for sheer beauty of expression with any English prose put on paper for the past 100 years.

It is a piece of literary tapestry—woven of such gossamer filaments as dreams are made of. Fantasy it is, delicately spun, and it is philosophy, edged with satire and tempered with tenderness; and it is fooling, the subtle and delicious fooling which is not foolishness.

What is it about? Two philosophers who lived in the center of the pine wood called Coilla Doraca are the most important characters. These men were so wise that they were able to answer the questions of the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin and the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath. No one else had ever been able to answer these questions and the women became so furious at the men who were wiser than they that they decided to marry them!

Leprecauns, the great god Pan himself, and other people of the Little World figure in the book, which won the Polignac Prize as being the best book of its year. Price, \$2.00.

# The Demi-Gods

♦

Patsy MacCann and his daughter Mary, tramps, the both of them, ever pressing on along the roads of Ireland in search of nothing except the next day's food, sat in the dusk, pulling potatoes from the red ashes. To join their party came three angels, old, middle aged, and a youth.

Patsy took them under his guidance, and the donkey caravan went on its aimless way, the only change being that Patsy had to filch food for three more mouths and provide clothes less spectacular than the white samite in which they first appeared—which he accomplished without ado by generous theft.

In whimsical fashion their wanderings are described. Strolling the highways they meet a curious ballad singer; an odd woman of many lovers, whom Patsy hates because he hopelessly adores; the ghost of an Irish bandit; a miser who has thrown his money away. The happy, careless freedom has been caught and portrayed with the audacity and charming assurance which only James Stephens could have given it. His original point of view and its expression, is refreshing indeed and one loves these outlaws every one—including the donkey.

Mr. Stephens has woven his facts and fancies into a deliciously humorous mass of improbability, the heart of which is as true as truth itself. Price. \$2.00.



# Here Are Ladies



Nineteen sketches and bits of verse make up this book. They are not stories, for the most part, but character sketches marked by whimsical extravagance.

With an occasional exception there is a woman in each of them and what more delightful theme could have been chosen? There is woman adorable and woman enigmatic; woman alluring and woman perplexing; woman wise and woman foolish. And Mr. Stephens, in his mingling of wisdom and whimsicality, does not hesitate to mention the intolerableness of men and the selfishness of their viewpoints . . . from (*of course*) the viewpoint of the ladies!



Some of the many gems from these stories are quoted below:

"A wife in the home is a critic on the hearth."

"Our husbands are barely tolerable until a lady friend has endeavored to abstract their cloying attentions."

"Nothing makes a man feel better than letting his employer know that he and his job can go bark at one another. It is the dream of a great many people, and were it not for the glamour of the idea, most folks would commit suicide through sheer disgust."

*The book is priced at \$2.00.*

# Deirdre

♦

Here Stephens has come to the theme to which every Irish writer seems born and predestined to recur—the story of the tragic Queen Deirdre and the trouble she brought her torn country. More than Brian Boru or Queen Mab or even St. Patrick, this Deirdre legend has dominated all of the literature of Celtic folklore. Almost every Irish writer of note has sooner or later undertaken to retell in play or poem or story, Deirdre's tale. Mr. Stephens, one feels, has done it once and for all time in a full length novel.

Says John Gunther in a review in *The Chicago Daily News*, "What a novel! Soul-stirring is perhaps as good an adjective as heroic. In it are poured all the glamour and the ecstasy and the wild Celtic beauty, together with the rare heartiness of humor, of which Stephens is master."

The story itself in essence is a simple and infinitely tragic one. The young queen is brought up in a distant castle while King Conchubar awaits her maturity. She succeeds in running away with her young lover and his two brothers, and they live for many years in the tangled bracken, elusive and eternally pursued. Finally she and her men are taken. Sorties, forays, and hand-to-hand fighting result. In the end—red death.

A heroic book, indeed! And a very beautiful and touching one. Price \$2.50.

## Extract from Ms. of Deirdre

She lost herself in the moon, wooing it, wooed by it, until she seemed to move in the moon, the moon to move in her; a sore whiteness, a sore chilliness, one equal potency—For what? For that, for it, for something, for nothing, for everything. She submitted her destiny to the delicate sweet lady of the sky, and one night, beckoned to, drawn at, surrounded, a small moon shining in the moon, she went on and on, passing the grass to the turf, leaving the turf for the stony places; from there to the wall, and over the wall also; so lightly, so imperceptibly, so moonily, the drowsy guard did not see; or if he saw 'twas but a moonbeam that rose and fell, that fluttered and faded, that lapsed over a piece of hollow ground and glimmered away on the slope, merging in the silver flood and the shades of ebony, & for a while he rubbed his eyes.

So she marched towards destiny. She went among the darkness of trees, & further, where the wood grew thin, into a dappled dancing of jet and silver, and

# In the Land of Youth

♦

Stephens, who so well knows the old bardic tales of Ireland, gave the world his first version in the lovely DEIRDRE. IN THE LAND OF YOUTH is the second.

The tale opens on All Hallows Eve, when anyone who has the requisite courage may cross the boundary between this work-a-day world and the kingdom of Faery, where a minute is a year, and where strange and surpassingly wonderful things take place.

The first story is of how Nera won the king's gold hilted sword and followed the men of the Shì into that land where everyone gets what he is able to wish for.

Here, also, is the story of Etain, the beautiful wife of Midir, lord of the Shì, who was stolen away by her husband's pupil, Angus, and was pursued by the druid, Bresil, and transformed by his arts into an insect. Born again, she was the daughter of Lord Etar and married to King Eochaid, only to be won back at last in a game of chess by Midir, who carried her off once more to the land of Faery. All the fancy and whimsy and philosophy of the famous CROCK OF GOLD are here, brave deeds of dauntless men, the wit of desirable women, and the dread spells of druids and masters of magic. *The price is \$2.50.*

"IN THE LAND OF YOUTH is written straight to those divine remnants of our former selves which we may have had the luck to keep and which he has the generosity to act as if we had kept even more than we have."—*Brooklyn Daily Eagle.*

# Irish Fairy Tales

♦

You may be sure that the author of the CROCK OF GOLD would give us no ordinary fairy tales. They have the humour and wisdom and beauty which makes them almost the essence of poetry.

It is a book which is as fascinating to adults as to children. There can be no doubt but that it will take a permanent place in literature. Mr. Stephens is a literary descendant of the unknown scribes of the past. Much that pleased them delights him.

There are ten stories including THE STORY OF TUAN MACCAIRILL, THE BOYHOOD OF FIONN, THE BIRTH OF BRAN, OISIN'S MOTHER, THE WOOING OF BECFOLA, THE LITTLE BRAWL AT ALLEN, THE CARL OF THE DRAB COAT, THE ENCHANTED CAVE OF CESH CORRAN, BECUMA OF THE WHITE SKIN, MONGAN'S FRENZY.

"It is not only in descriptions of what is grotesque that James Stephens has this abundance and this mastery. His descriptions of things that have loveliness and grace are masterful too. The book has all the glamour of Celtic romance, but it has also the humour and the conscious extravagance that are in that romance. It has brought us into a world of enchantment, compared to which the enchantment in Marie de France's Lays, and in the Mabinogion of the Welsh story tellers, is only a far-flung echo."

Padraic Colum in *The Dial*.

Frontispiece by Arthur Rackham. The price is \$2.50.



# The Hill of Vision

Promises of vast views and dreamy distances, of philosophy and fancy lurk within the title of this volume. Nor is the reader disappointed.

Stephens first became known to American readers through verse and there is much in THE HILL OF VISION to retain and enlarge the popularity that his first work made. An insurgent he is, but he realizes fully the futility of abuse. Perhaps this is responsible for the tolerance lurking beneath even his most scathing criticisms. *The price is \$1.75.*



# Reincarnations

The freshness and felicity of James Stephens' poetic gift have been widely recognized. In REINCARNATIONS this true poet makes himself a medium for reviving, if not the writings, at least the memories, of Irish poets of from one hundred to three hundred years ago.

There are, he tells us, only two translations in the lot, and the name of the collection, he says, with characteristic humor, should be "Loot," or "Plunder," or "Pieces of Eight," or "Treasure Trove."

"Mr. Stephens' 'bubble of verse,' as he calls it, is shot through with gayety, humor and musical charm. It is, indeed, a bubble, but there is perfection in its fashioning."—*Springfield Republican.*

*The price is \$1.60.*

# SECRETS

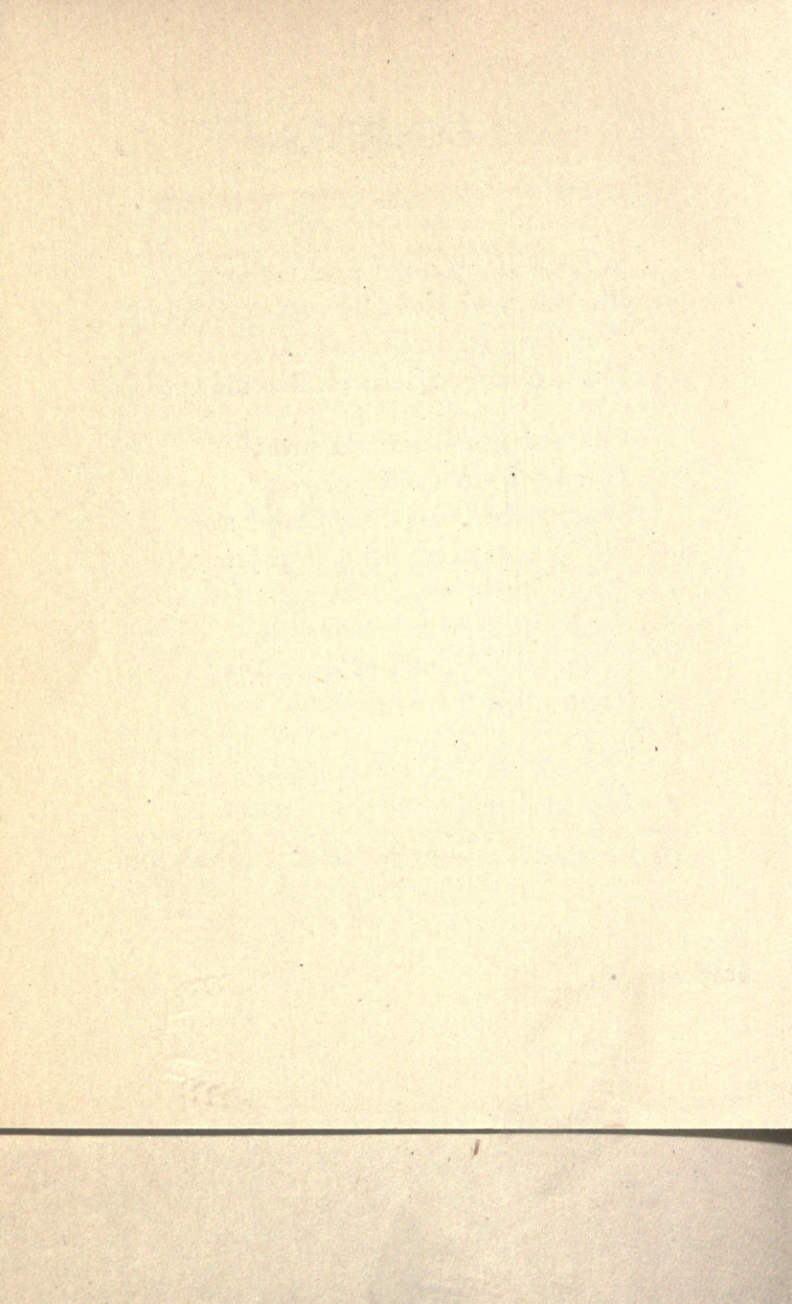


When I was young I used to think,  
That every eye peered through a chink,  
And every man was hid behind  
His own thick self where none could find.

That every woman in the street,  
Looking fair and smiling sweet,  
Was maybe hiding thoughts that were  
Not quite so sweet, nor quite so fair  
As her kind smile and blossom face;  
She hid in some forgotten place  
Within herself and would not dare  
To let another see her there.

And though I'm older still I see  
In every face a mystery.

—from THE HILL OF VISION





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